

STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE CHRISTIAN A. HERTER  
SECRETARY OF STATE  
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL POLICY MACHINERY  
OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

I welcome the opportunity to offer this Committee my views on those aspects of the national policy machinery with which I am most familiar. My comments are based on reflections arising from my service as Under Secretary and Secretary of State, and of course as a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives.

It seems to me that several fundamental considerations underlie the questions concerning the Department of State which you have asked me to discuss today. While these are generally well understood, they might bear restating to be sure we are on common ground.

First of all, under the Constitution and the historical development of our Government, executive responsibility for the conduct of foreign relations and the enunciation of foreign policy resides squarely with the President. As this Committee knows so well, the course of events of the past two decades has given to these responsibilities dimensions that are awesome, to say the least.

Secondly, it follows that the fundamental mission of the Secretary of State is to assist and support the President in the discharge of his responsibilities for foreign affairs. Unlike, I believe, any other major department, the basic authority of the Department of State is left completely to the discretion of the President. The basic statute of the Department of State provides that the Secretary of State

"shall perform and execute such duties as shall, from time to time, be enjoined on or entrusted to him by the President of the United States, agreeable to the Constitution . . ."

Thirdly, as became evident after the conclusion of the last war, and as becomes more apparent with each passing year, international affairs no longer have an existence separate from domestic affairs, and they can no longer be treated except in the context of the entire range of Governmental activities.

Practically

Practically every Government department and agency has to a varying degree a proper concern, and in some instances responsibility, for one facet or another of international affairs. Conversely, the Department of State is properly concerned with facets of domestic affairs which have major impact upon our foreign relations.

Before proceeding further, I should like to make several observations on the considerations I have just enumerated.

The burden of the President's responsibilities for international affairs is almost indescribably heavy. I think all of us must be sympathetic and helpful in doing what we can to provide the President with the highest possible calibre of assistance, both with respect to his immediate staff and in each of the various departments of government concerned.

The relationship between the President and the Secretary of State is, of necessity, a very personal one. It has, over the years, varied with circumstances and personalities and will undoubtedly continue to do so. The relationship can never be considered fixed beyond the tenure of either incumbent, and any effort to make it so would hamper rather than enhance effective performance.

Every President, in his own way, has defined the role he wishes the Secretary of State to carry out. President Eisenhower has set forth quite clearly on repeated occasions his concept of the function of the Secretary of State. Typically, he stated on June 1, 1953, that

"I personally wish to emphasize that I shall regard the Secretary of State as the Cabinet officer responsible for advising and assisting me in the formulation and control of foreign policy. It will be my practice to employ the Secretary of State as my channel of authority within the executive branch on foreign policy. Other officials of the executive branch will work with and through the Secretary of State on matters of foreign policy."

These principles have been adhered to in succeeding years. I would doubt that any more explicit or enlarged statement is necessary.

I do not wish to leave the impression by my emphasis on the discretion that must be available to the President that there are not enduring guideposts within which we can approach the questions we are considering today. In my opinion the Secretary of State should, under the President, have in his relations with other Departments, a clear primacy in foreign relations and in all matters with a substantial effect upon foreign relations. This is not to say that the Secretary of State should be charged with operating all of the programs carried on abroad in support of our national security goals, but that he should have clear primacy as to policy on these programs.

Nor is it to say that the Secretary of State need normally have the power of decision upon matters crossing departmental jurisdiction simply because they involve foreign affairs. Rather, the Secretary of State should be looked to for formulation of recommendations to the President, when appropriate through the NSC mechanism, which take into account the considerations and views set forth by other Departments. Assistance of this nature enables the President to focus effectively on foreign affairs problems of transcendent importance. In following through on these principles, it is hard to state general rules which will be self-enforcing. It is more a matter of recognizing that the activities and programs are for a foreign affairs purpose and should therefore be guided by the official responsible for foreign affairs.

In my opinion good organization alone will not suffice for the solution of foreign affairs problems of the magnitude and complexity which confront us today. While I am well aware of the value of good organization and soundly conceived relationships, I find that I subscribe to the sentiments of those who place even greater value on the human element -- on the devotion, ability and experience of the personnel of the Department of State and the other principal departments of government. This is why I have been such a strong advocate of the moves made in recent years to strengthen the Foreign Service -- and, indeed, the entire Department of State. While I have been pleased with the progress made in matters such as training and integration of the foreign and domestic officer corps, I have recognized that there is much that remains to be done. This is a long-range program and I very much hope that it will continue to have the support of my successors and of the future Congresses of the United States.

The ability of any Secretary of State to serve the President is dependent not only on his own capacities but also on the support available to him from the Department of State. The responsibilities customarily assigned to the Secretary of State for providing leadership to the Government as a whole in the international field require the participation of many parts of the Department. The capacity of the Department of State to provide leadership at all levels is dependent, in the final analysis, not upon fiat but rather upon the competence, judgment, energy and comprehension of the many officers who are involved.

I should now like to speak to the questions relating to the Department of State which were posed in the Interim Report of this Subcommittee.

First are those concerned with whether the Secretary of State should have a more dominant role in the formulation of over-all national security policy.

"Are the

"Are the responsibilities of the State and Defense Departments in national security policymaking now correctly defined and divided? If not, what changes are needed?"

In my judgment, they are correctly defined, and the division is working well. I do not believe that any major improvement in the relationships between the Department of State and the Department of Defense would result from further efforts to define their respective responsibilities. A more immediate and profitable target is for the Department of State to seek to improve its capacity to provide timely political guidance to the Department of Defense and, reciprocally, for the latter to seek to improve its capacity to provide timely military advice. I should emphasize that this is being done not only at the senior levels but at all levels in the two Departments. The advice worked into problems at the lower levels is frequently the most helpful.

The functional and organizational aspects of State-Defense relations are, of course, important. More important, however, is the continuing development of personnel in both departments who share understanding and perspective in the gray area where foreign policy and military policy come in contact or overlap. In this regard, the common experience shared by personnel of the two Departments who attend the War Colleges and the Foreign Service Institute, is very helpful. In addition, I think it would be worthwhile to have an exchange of personnel between the two Departments. The men loaned would function as an integral part of the host agency, contributing their own special knowledge, and would return to their parent agency at the end of the tour with the broadened perspective which is acquired through shoulder-to-shoulder work. We might, over a period of years with such a program, develop a nucleus of highly trained senior officers within the two departments, each having a profound and comprehensive understanding of the subject matter and viewpoint of the other Department. If this understanding were regularly and consistently brought to bear on the solution of problems of mutual concern, much more good would be accomplished than could result from efforts to adjust and refine the respective responsibilities of the two Departments. I should add that the broadening of personal contacts among senior officers resulting from such an interchange would be a major asset in ensuring the continuity of a productive relationship between the Departments of State and Defense.

"Should the Secretary of State be formally charged with more responsibility in connection with our defense posture and the defense budget?"

No. First

No. First of all, I regard somewhat skeptically the word "formally" as contravening the basic concept that the Secretary of State is the agent of the President and that it is unwise to prescribe how the President may utilize him. More to the point, however, is my belief that participation by the Secretary of State in the NSC, in the Cabinet and in confidential discussions with the President affords ample opportunity to advise the President on the defense posture and the defense budget. In addition, I feel free to advise and consult with the Secretary of Defense on these topics, and I do so.

"Should the Secretary of State be asked to testify in the Congress concerning foreign policy implications of the Defense budget?"

The Congress, of course, is entitled to obtain whatever advice it deems necessary to ensure the enactment of wise legislation. In recent years a number of steps have been taken in the Executive Branch to ensure consideration of foreign policy implications in determining the defense budget. It must be recognized, I think, that should the Secretary of State testify on the defense budget, he would undoubtedly be supporting decisions in which he has already participated. These budget decisions, as I have seen them, have not been made in a vacuum, and the Departments are fully aware of each others' interests.

"Would it be desirable to create a 'super Secretary of State' who would be responsible for the overall direction of foreign affairs, and who might have under him additional Secretaries of Cabinet rank for such areas as diplomacy, information, and foreign economic matters?"

Although I can fully understand and sympathize with the general objectives desired by those who advocate a so-called super Secretary of State with Cabinet level agencies reporting to him, I do not believe that such a proposal would be desirable. There are a number of factors that cause me to question this proposal. Among them is the assumption of equivalence for areas such as diplomacy, information and foreign economic matters. I do not believe the areas are, in fact, equivalent. If these three principal areas are to be equated, it will then become necessary to establish what I fear would be an excessively large coordinating mechanism at the level of the super Secretary of State. Instead of being relieved of burdens, he might find his load increased.

This is

-6-

This is not to say that I disagree with the concept that our foreign economic and foreign information activities ought to be under the control of the Secretary of State. It may be desirable at some time for the overseas information activities to be brought into the Department in a semi-autonomous status somewhat similar to that successfully followed with respect to the ICA.

Next, in the Interim Report are those questions concerned with lightening the burdens of the Secretary of State.

"Would it be desirable to create a Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cabinet rank responsible to the Secretary of State who would represent the United States at Foreign Ministers' meetings? Would any other arrangement help, such as appointment of Ambassadors at Large?"

The underlying question here is whether it is possible to lighten the negotiating burdens of the Secretary of State in order to give him more time to discharge his responsibilities at home. I do not consider feasible the proposal to create a Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cabinet rank, responsible to the Secretary of State, who would represent the United States at Foreign Ministers' meetings. When Foreign Ministers meet, they are meeting as their governments' chief advisers on foreign affairs. Since the Secretary of State would continue in this country to be that chief adviser, another representative, no matter what his rank and title, would create problems for the other Foreign Ministers.

I am coming to the conclusion that it would be desirable for the Foreign Ministers to curtail the occasions upon which they themselves attend meetings. To do this would require greater delegation to principal subordinates and greater reliance upon the normal mechanisms of diplomacy. Additionally, in this day when there are some 85 nations who must deal with each other, we may have to dispense with some of the ways of protocol which we no longer have the time to afford.

Next are those questions which concern State-Defense relations.

"What is the proper relationship between State and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (and/or the Joint Staff of the JCS)? Should a representative of the Secretary of State participate in discussions of the JCS when appropriate?"

The Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff do, and should continue to, form a well-coordinated and smoothly working team in both the planning and execution of national security policy.

The two Departments naturally have very extensive relationships on a multitude of subjects which enable the Department of State to inject foreign policy considerations into military affairs at all stages. Secretary Gates and I confer with each other frequently and we also participate in larger meetings such as the NSC and the Cabinet. An Under Secretary of State confers regularly with the JCS and the Assistant Secretary of State for Policy Planning meets regularly with the Joint Staff of the JCS and officers of the Department of Defense. State, Defense and military officials work directly together across the board and without any formalities and especially so when there is a premium on speed of action. In addition to our broad and fruitful policy relationships with Defense through ISA, we have direct relationships with the three Services on a variety of subjects.

I believe it would be a mistake to have an officer of the Department of State sit with the JCS as a representative of the Department of State, but I would not rule out the long term possibility that a senior officer of the Department might be assigned to the JCS in an advisory capacity. While such an official might not participate in the deliberations of the JCS as an official spokesman for the Department of State, he might have a role comparable to that of a political adviser to a unified military command.

Next are the questions directed toward improvement of planning in the Departments of State and Defense.

"Should officials with more diverse backgrounds and experience be brought into the Policy Planning Staffs of State and Defense? Is there a need for a Joint State-DOD-JCS Planning Staff? Can greater use be made of ad hoc interdepartmental task forces on special issues of national security policy?"

We have long recognized the need for officers of diverse backgrounds on our Policy Planning Staff. I think that we have succeeded fairly well in meeting this need. Naturally, we shall continue to select with great care the members of this staff so as to ensure a balance of knowledge and background.

A Joint State-DOD-JCS Planning Staff would have the merit of bringing together diverse backgrounds, but might have the drawback of being apart from the operating departments and out of the mainstream. The firm connection with reality which proximity to operations gives is certainly a requisite of useful planning. This is one of the reasons why the Planning

Board of the NSC has been so useful; its members are active participants in the operations of their own departments as well as members of a joint planning staff. Additionally, we have utilized interdepartmental task forces for planning on special issues, and we have found it to be an excellent means of bringing to bear upon a problem the best knowledge of several agencies.

Lastly, there is the question about a joint career service embracing senior officers selected from State, Defense and related national security agencies.

"Is the proposed joint career service practical and worthwhile?"

The joint career service proposal strikes me as being a rather drastic and administratively cumbersome approach to the very desirable objective of developing policy makers with non-parochial viewpoints and wide breadth of experience. As I suggested earlier, I believe the interchange of selected personnel between the Departments of State and Defense and the use of joint task forces on planning might go a long way toward meeting this objective and should be tried before we resort to the more drastic proposal for a joint career service.

In conclusion I wish to thank the Committee for this opportunity to meet with it. I will be glad to answer questions on this statement.

\* \* \*

State--RD, Wash., D.C.